1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

kept at his village. Although his lords, and ultimately the Paramount Chief, had rights in the cattle, their day-to-day care was his responsibility and he had in practice the greatest say in their disposal, either for consumption, for payment of bridewealth, or for damages awarded against a member of his segment. He was head of the most clearly demarcated local group and was responsible for it to the heads of superior segments. The village was the cattle-herding unit, but for agricultural tasks it seems probable that in large villages the co-operative unit was the division. Agricultural work was directed, at least so far as women were concerned, by the lady of the division. I have no clear information on how domestic tasks such as cooking were organized within the village but it seems probable that individual women cooked for their husbands and for the children in their care.[18]

Fraser writes of the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland that a village headman had special ritual duties to perform when his village shifted to a new site, and Rattray reports a similar procedure for the southern Ngoni. Wiese mentions an oracular method of selecting a new village site among the Fort Jameson Ngoni but is silent on whether or not the headman had a special role to play.[19] I could gain no information from my own informants about former practices, but nowadays the headman has no specific ritual to perform when a village shifts.

There is little evidence about the number of villages in the Ngoni State. There are a few conflicting observations on population and size and number of villages in the Fort Jameson group at the time of the conquest,[20] and we have estimates for the population of different groups in recent years, but estimates of the population and number of villages at earlier dates are all highly speculative.

The term for lieutenant, *nduna*, was used at all levels in the residential system and was applied even to men who had not yet founded their own segments. As already mentioned, a lieutenant was a quasi-related dependant, not a kinsman, of his lord who was selected to be in charge of a section of his lord's dependants and to carry out the instructions of his lord. Some of my informants referred to a ceremony at which a new office of lieutenant was created and a feather placed in the hair of the newly appointed man, but others appeared not to have heard of this custom. The

[18] Barnes, *Marriage*, pp. 15*f*. For the Ngoni of southern Nyasaland, see Read, 'Standards', p. 16.

[19] Fraser, *Primitive peoples*, pp. 107*f*; Rattray, *Folk-lore stories*, pp. 56*f*, 103*f*, 196*f*; Wiese, 'Geschichte', p. 199. In his 'Expedição', p. 480, Wiese associates this method only with a change of residence by the Paramount Chief.

[20] See pp. 103*f*.

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

such as Sharpe, Thomson and Deare, and with my own information based on village histories. Combining this with the lowest estimate of population, we arrive at a population density of 100 persons to the square mile, while the highest estimate implies a density of 375. Highly unreliable as these figures are, it is clear that the density of population was considerably greater before the conquest than it is now, when it averages about 68 persons to the square mile. Even the present-day figure is nearly three times the density which the land can sustain in perpetuity.

This dense population was concentrated in large villages. Angus estimated that there were at least a thousand huts in Loangeni, while Deare estimated that there were sixteen hundred. Read states that it was over three miles across, while Genthe says that Ngoni villages were about five times the size of the average Cewa village. From the top of a mountain, Deare saw eleven villages all about the same size as Loangeni.[161] Thus it seems that there were several villages with populations of the order of three thousand. If Deare and Johnston are right in their estimates of tribal population the majority of the people lived in these big villages.

Yet by September 1898 the only villages left in Mpezeni's country were a few to the east of Fort Young. All the rest had been destroyed by troops, and their former inhabitants were said to be 'still timid' and living in scattered groups in grass shelters.[162] The large pre-conquest settlements were particularly vulnerable to attack by troops armed with guns and intent on burning, the more so because there were no defensive preparations at all. Glave wrote in 1894 that the Ngoni 'have no stockaded village, such protection they deem unnecessary as no enemy can be strong enough to attack them'.[163]

The large villages and the high density of population were appropriate only to a victorious military society, relying for at least part of its subsistence on raided crops and beasts produced outside its borders and for the rest on the maximum exploitation of the land inside them. When its enemies had been plundered and its own lands exhausted, it moved on. We can infer from Angus and from Sharpe, who wrote of 'entirely open' country,[164] that within the settled area most of the cultivable land was in use at the same time. Yet in many parts of the Fort Jameson area the soil is now exhausted after five years under maize and must be left for twenty-five years

[161] Angus, 'Northern Anguniland', p. 56; Deare, 'Slave raiders', 07 April and 11 May; Read, 'Tradition', p. 475, fn. 9; Genthe, 'Mpezeni V', p. 1.
[162] Kelly, memorandum dated 10 March 1901.
[163] 86, fn. 339.
[164] Sharpe, 'Lake Nyasa', p. 345. For Angus, see pp. 104f.

CHAPTER I

THE NGONI PEOPLE

In the census of Nyasaland of 1945, there were 193,482 people enumerated as Ngoni. Their distribution extended from the extreme north in Karonga district through every other district to the extreme south in Port Herald district. There were concentrations of Ngoni people, however, as Table I shows, in the Maimba district in the north, in the Dowa, Lilongwe, Dedza and Ncheu districts of the central province, and in the Blantyre district in the south. The Ngoni in the Maimba district were known as Mbelwa's Ngoni [1] and will be called in this book the northern Ngoni Kingdom.

Table I

Distribution of Ngoni in Nyasaland by Provinces and Districts from 1945 Census

Northern Province	Total	45,539
Maimba district		44,948
Karonga "		295
Chitipa "		296
Central Province[a]	Total	80,943
Karonga district		1,539
Dowa "		20,329
Lilongwe "		17,397
Dedza "		14,737
Ncheu "		13,249
Kota-kota "		4,838
Port Manning "		3,851
Southern Province	Total	67,000
Blantyre district		23,024
Zomba "		9,071
Liwonde "		7,579
Ncno "		10,211
Chiko "		9,185
Fort Johnston "		1,343
Chikwawa "		1,019
Chiradzulu "		4,855
Mlanje "		731
Port Herald "		38
Total		193,482

[a] In 1931 this was included in the Northern Province.

[1] Tew, M. *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region*. O.U.P., 1950, p. 91.

[P2 is blank]

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

the northern Ngoni kingdom. Other groups of these Ngoni were found in three separate states in the Dowa and Kota Kota districts. The Ngoni in the Ncheu district were known as Gomani's Ngoni and will be called in this book the central Ngoni kingdom. Four states which separated from this kingdom were found in the Dedza, Lilongwe and Cholo districts. The Ngoni in Fort Manning district belonged to Mpezeni's kingdom in the Fort Jameson district of Northern Rhodesia.

According to these census figures, the northern Ngoni kingdom with the three separated states accounted for 69,706; the central kingdom with the four separated states accounted for 46,891. Leaving out the Fort Manning Ngoni, there were 71,354 Ngoni in the rest of Nyasaland who had at one time formed part of the northern and central kingdoms and their offshoots, but who had dispersed in search of work and had made large settlements in the towns and on the estates of the southern province where employment was to be found. A similar dispersion from the main Ngoni concentrations in Nyasaland to Southern and Northern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa had taken place which formed part of the extensive emigration from Nyasaland in search of better employment than that available in the territory.

The existence of two Ngoni kingdoms, several smaller Ngoni states, and a still larger number of people enumerated as Ngoni but dispersed in every district of Nyasaland, poses a number of problems for the anthropologist. In this book I have concentrated on the two Ngoni kingdoms and on the Ngoni culture found in them in the 1930's. It was my intention, by focusing on the two kingdoms, to show that there was an Ngoni culture which had common elements in both areas and hence was shared to some extent by all the Ngoni living in Nyasaland. We shall be asking the questions in Part I—Who can be called Ngoni? What is Ngoni culture? Why do people in every district of Nyasaland enumerate themselves as Ngoni though a large number no longer live in the Ngoni kingdoms or in the Ngoni states? Are we discussing a people whose cultural affiliation survives political dispersal? The chief problem in the relation between the Ngoni kingdoms as political states and Ngoni culture will be stated in Part I and illustrated and analysed in the rest of the book. In this chapter, we shall examine the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of the two Ngoni kingdoms.

ETHNIC ELEMENTS IN THE NGONI KINGDOMS

There were four main groups of people in the Ngoni kingdoms, distinguished by the areas from which their ancestors came and designated by the Ngoni as 'those from the south', 'those from south of the Zambezi', 'those from the march' and 'those from this country'. The Ngoni said that the clan descent name of a person showed to which group he or she belonged.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FRS Ngoni FRS

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CHAPTER II

THE NGONI KINGDOMS

In 1933, by the Native Authorities Ordinance and the Native Courts Ordinance, Mbelwa was recognised as Paramount of the northern Ngoni kingdom with six Subordinate Native Authorities under him, and his court was constituted the appeal court for their six courts. The same procedure was followed in the central kingdom for Paramount Gomani with six Subordinate Native Authorities, and his court as the appeal court for their courts. They were the only rulers in Nyasaland with S.N.A.[1] under them. Two other chiefs, Cikulamayembe of the Henga in Mzimba district and Kyungu of the Ngonde in North Nyasa district, had respectively four and five courts subordinate to them, but the chiefs owning these courts were not recognised as their subordinates. The Ngoni comment on these ordinances was 'Ha! Now they see what big chiefs we have. Only our chiefs are called *inkosi*.'

The northern kingdom was in Mzimba district, and Paramount Mbelwa's royal village was at the southern end of his kingdom. The central kingdom included the whole of Ncheu district with Paramount Gomani's royal village at the northern end. This kingdom had Portuguese territory on its western frontier, close to the royal village. When the Portuguese boundary was fixed in 1891, the Ngoni kingdom under the Maseko Paramount was cut in two and a section under a Maseko ruler became a separate kingdom under the Portuguese. There was constant trouble in the 1930's over this Portuguese frontier, for Gomani's Ngoni visited their relatives, grazed their cattle and hoed gardens on the Portuguese side; and from time to time claims by the Portuguese for rent for gardens and grazing lands and disputes about taxation, needed judicious handling in the District Commissioner's court.

The figures in Table II for Mzimba and Ncheu districts in 1926, 1931, and 1945 show the changes in the ethnic composition of the districts, some of which are difficult to account for. In Mzimba district the Henga under Cikulamayembe were included in the figures for the Tumbuka and hence the northern Ngoni kingdom did not include all the 156,208 in the district. In Ncheu, the total district population of 87,690 were all included in the central Ngoni kingdom, showing the mixed ethnic elements, among which the Ngoni, or those who were enumerated as Ngoni, had declined from 64,023 in 1926 to 15,241 in 1945. Between 1931 and 1945 the decrease in the number of Ngoni (31,066) was almost balanced by the increase in the number of Nyanja

[1] This abbreviation will be used henceforward in referring to Subordinate Native Authorities.

2: Read E-S (1935-1939) 1956
FRS Ngoni FRS

(33,107). It is difficult not to assume that many Nyasja had formerly called themselves Ngoni.

Table II

	1926	1931	1945
Mzimba district			
Ngoni	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Tumbuka	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Chewa	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Yao	[illegible]	—	—
Lungu	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Nkhonde	[illegible]	—	—
Others	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Total	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Kota-Kota district			
Ngoni	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Chewa	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Tumbuka	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Yao	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Lungu, etc.	—	—	[illegible]
Others	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Total	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Since the two Ngoni kingdoms are the subject of this book and not the secession states, the position of the rulers of these states as Native Authorities and the circumstances of their secession from the two main groups will not be examined here. The three secession states in the north were under Chiefs Chiwere and Mankoroswe in Dowa district and Jere in Kasungu district. The four concerned formerly with the central Ngoni were under Chiefs Kaomo and Kachindamoto in Dedza, Mwase in Lilongwe and Nyambose in Chola.

In the 1930's, when I was living sometimes in the northern kingdom, sometimes in the central, and for a time in the Ngoni state under Chief Jere, I was aware that the existence of the two kingdoms and of the seven secession states did not preclude a great deal of contact between the Ngoni of the different areas. The stream of travel in Nyasaland from south to north and from north to south along the one trunk road, brought Ngoni as visitors from one kingdom to the other, from the smaller states to both kingdoms, and from 'the Ngoni of the dispersion' living in towns to visit their relatives and friends in the Ngoni kingdoms and states. These visits might be social, to see parents or to marry a wife; they might be for economic purposes, to invest in or sell cattle, to supervise estates or tobacco marketing; or they might be for ritual purposes such as mourning. When I travelled in the central Ngoni kingdom in 1938 with T. M. Chimtimbo, the historian of the northern

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FRS Ngoni FRS

was instructed before marriage how to keep these household possessions in good repair, and how to smear the floor and walls of the hut with cowdung so that they presented the shining surface typical of Ngoni buildings.

The tables which follow show the total population of these villages in each kingdom at the time they were visited in 1938 and 1939, including such data as the number of widows, of plural marriages, of wives for whom *lobolo* was given, and the number of men away at work.

	1 Men	2 Men	3 Women	4 Children	5 Total	6 Men away	7 Widows	8 Plural marriages	9 Lobolo marriages
Northern Kingdom									
Kumwini	22	19	21	48	110	10	0	0	21
Mshikwini	13	9	21	21	64	0	1	0	12
Mchengeni	30	24	36	51	141	11	4	0	30
Central Kingdom									
Chikwini	32	22	32	33	119	13	3	0	9
Mangwe	62	51	63	88	264	9	18	6	16
Mtshilwiche	110	51	110	88	359	30	16	14	16

Earlier in this chapter reference was made to the patterns of residential grouping on a kinship basis, which had evolved from the mixed tribal groups in the very large villages of pre-European days. The choice of these six villages as examples was made mainly on the grounds that they had a considerable proportion of members of Swazi or trans-Zambezi clans and therefore illustrated the traditional Ngoni pattern of kinship grouping. The northern kingdom villages showed the hamplala and papa pattern well enough. It had disappeared in the central kingdom villages with the result that the villages were much larger, and included groups based on house affiliation which would have been divided into separate villages in the north. On the other hand the sub-division of a village in the central kingdom into *hamplas* was not found in the north.

The data concerning these villages have been analysed to illustrate the households associated with the chief man in the leading clan in the village. These households were those of his wives, his mothers, his brothers, his sons, sisters and daughters. In the north this man was in one case a sub-chief, in another a son of a great war indoona, and in the third the head of a collateral branch of the royal clan. In the central kingdom the chief man in one was a sub-chief, in another a grandson of a great war indoona, and in the third the head of the clan of the royal chiefdom. The proportion of households belonging to the leading clan was much higher in the smaller villages of the north than in the east, since they were approximating to a one-family village.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

women's. For all ceremonies the men sat on the right side, and the women on the left, the place of honour for the leading man and woman being by the main door-posts. No young man or woman ever thought of sitting near them. The other place of significance lay between the fire and the back of the hut on the right-hand side; it was known as the 'place of the spirits', the 'ancestors' corner', where the baskets and spears and other ritual objects were kept which were used in the ancestral cult. Only the owner of the hut or those taking part in the ritual could approach this corner.

In this land, into the cultural pattern of Ngoni village and household life, the Ngoni children were born. In such villages and homes they passed their earlier years, and grew from boys and girls to young adults.

The Ngoni kingdoms

When the Ngoni made parts of Nyasaland their homeland they set up conquest states on the pattern which they had been familiar with in southern Africa. Where they settled, they either conquered the local peoples who lived in that area, or accepted their submission. Until the British administration was established the Ngoni carried on wars and raids against neighbouring peoples to enlarge the boundaries of their kingdoms. As a conquest state, similar to that of the Ndebele in Southern Rhodesia, the population of the Ngoni kingdoms was of mixed origin, some whose ancestors came from Natal, some from the territories passed through on their northward march, and some from Nyasaland itself.

The kingdoms were organised on a centralised pattern with the Paramount Chief as supreme ruler and subordinate chiefs under him. The Ngoni code of law operated in the courts of the chiefs, and, as they proudly said, "there was one law for all people". Military service was required from all young men, and each territorial chief had to bring his quota of warriors to the Paramount's village when a war summons went out. Military service, obedience to the law,

105 621 senior men who related to me historial events, family genealogies, war-songs and other Ngoni traditional knowledge, including the ideas and methods of bringing up Ngoni children. In the evenings the schoolboys gathered by my hut to [124] [191] practise their English, to discuss their school work and their plans for the future. The tsetse menace had for some time been threatening the cattle and losses were considerable. The boys wanted above all to emigrate and find work so that they could earn money to send home to their fathers to buy more cattle, pay taxes, buy clothes, guns and ammunition, for it was lion country.

Out of the thirty-one households in the village, twenty- [162] [592] five belonged to the men of Ngoni clans. There were nine elderly widows of Ngoni leading families, and of the younger women eighteen were true Ngoni. There was therefore both among the men and the women, and in the senior and younger age-groups, a high proportion of those who were true Ngoni and who practised the Ngoni way of living. It was a village where Ngoni cultural patterns were very much in evidence, and where the school and the church, representing modern developments, were closely integrated with village life.

Emzakazeni was just off a main road and as easily acces- [361] sible as Enkedlweni was remote. It was perched on a hill-top in a commanding position, and was much larger, with a hundred and twenty-two households compared with thirty-one. There were several kraals and many cattle, no tsetse menace, but lions in the neighbourhood which more than once attacked the kraal at night. Outsiders, that is of non-Ngoni clans, who had money, had married into the chief's and other leading families, and these households possessed well-built brick houses. I lived in a grass-and-pole hut inside a fence, near the compound of the big house. There was [193] [871] [797] no school in the village, and the nearest one was run by a mission disliked by the leading Ngoni. The boys spent all their time with the cattle, or hunting or practising crafts.

): Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

There were musicians and craftsmen there, as at Enkodlwei. All the senior Ngoni men knew Ngoni history, used proverbs in the courts and in conversation, and two or three senior men knew and carried out the ritual of the ancestor cult. The new element in this village was due to economic influences rather than missionary and educational. Most of the men had learned to read and write Nyanja while away at work, but no one knew more than a few words of English, and only one or two of the leading men, and no women, spoke Ngoni.

The men of the leading Ngoni families formed a closely knit group for purposes of village affairs, social life and ritual performances. There was a group of senior Ngoni women who exerted a powerful influence in all matters concerned with household life and the bringing up of children. But out of a total of one hundred and twenty-one households, only thirty-seven belonged to men of Ngoni clans, and there were only thirty-two women of Ngoni clans including both the older and the younger groups of women. The aristocratic group here was small in comparison with Enkodlwei, but the influence of their ways of living was proportionately much stronger. The Ngoni men and women of leading families were very conscious of their cultural distinction and also of their relatively small numbers, and many were the complaints about 'those other people who are living on our land', 'spoiling our land'.

Political and social changes

When the British took over the administration of Nyasaland between 1891 and 1901, the Ngoni kingdoms received no special recognition. Their chiefs, called by the administration principal village headmen, and their heads of clans called village headmen, were relegated to the same position *vis-à-vis* the administration as the local peoples. Part of the Central Ngoni kingdom was cut off from the rest by the treaty demarcating the Nyasaland boundary from Portuguese East Africa.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

CHAPTER III

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

1. The field of modern marriage

581 MARRIAGE nowadays among the Ngoni still regulates the sexual activities of man and wife and determines the responsibility for the care of their young children, the inheritance of their property, and succession to office. To a lesser extent it still determines residence and establishes relationships between a partner to the marriage and his or her affines. It is an institution which involves sooner or later almost every Ngoni man or woman who survives into adulthood. The number of people who die adult and [806] unmarried is very small. Even albinos, who are regarded generally with disgust, usually succeed in marrying. The only people who 589 fail to marry at all are: seriously crippled people who are regarded as not strong enough to look after themselves; a few prostitutes who [548] acquire a reputation for wantonness before they have managed to find a husband and who live in a succession of temporary alliances with men in and around the township of Fort Jameson; and a category of persons known as 'quite useless people',[1] that is, people [828] who are mad or in some way deranged so that they are unable to settle down in any place and are always wandering about from village to village, begging shelter, beer and food.

A man who does not marry, or who remains divorced or widowed for many years, is regarded as unusual, and others say of him that he must smell like a he-goat so that no woman will have him. A man in his twenties without a wife is laughed at by the married women, who despise him as impotent. Very few men in fact stay long without a wife, and of people whose personalities are regarded as normal it is only a few old widowers who do not have a wife to cook for them and sleep with them. Some women stay for longer [162] without a husband, partly because of the numerical preponderance 128 of women over men caused by labour migration.

Some idea of the extent to which marriage affects everyone sooner or later is given by Tables III and IV. These tables, like all the others in this paper, are based on information collected systematically 121 from six Ngoni villages. Two of these villages, containing 237 and 142 residents, situated twenty-five miles apart and in different counties, were selected for me to live in by the county chiefs concerned. The remaining four villages containing 143, 104, 55 and 45 [59] residents, were close together but in a third county and twenty miles away from the first two.

[1] Cisilu, pl. sisilu, or also locally isilyelelyele. Cf. Nsenga silu, pl. susilu, idiot.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

away from the other two. They were the four most accessible from my base camp, built at a site chosen by the Administration. I was able to compare their size, history, and kinship structure with those of many other villages I visited, and as far as I could tell they were in these respects fairly typical Ngoni villages. They form a sample of approximately one per cent of the whole of the Fort Jameson Ngoni.

The tables in which the units are individuals or extant marriages (III, IV, IX, X, XIII and XIV) are based on the marital histories of the men and woman normally resident in those villages during the latter part of 1948, in one village, and during the earlier part of 1949 in the other five. In Tables I, II, V to VIII, XI and XII, where the units are marriages and not individuals, I have drawn on the histories of men and women who lived in these villages as wedded people for at least part of the time from 1946 to 1949. I endeavoured to interview the whole population but failed to do so for various reasons. I was however, able to determine who was, and who was not, a resident in these villages, and can therefore indicate the number of people who could have been included in this six-village sample had more been known about them. Some of my interviews were only partial.

In Tables V to VIII, which deal with the incidence and magnitude of marriage payments, each marriage is classified by the decade in which it began. This is not necessarily the decade in which the payment was made, for as we have noted payments are sometime made after many years of marriage. Unfortunately I do not have enough information to classify by the decade of payment.

In the tables I have used the word 'wedded' to refer to all people who had ever been married, whether or not they were currently married at the time of inquiry.

It will be seen from Table III that in this sample there was no unwedded man over the age of twenty-four, and, out of a total of 116 wedded men, there were only one widower and seven men whose last marriage had ended in divorce and who had not remarried. From Table IV we see that there was only one unwedded woman over the age of nineteen, but that there were as many as 31 widows who had not remarried. Only about a half, 122 out of 223, of the wedded women were living with their husbands.

Marriage is then an experience that sooner or later comes to nearly every man or woman, although not every adult lives all the time in a simple family of procreation. Nevertheless, the ties forged by marriage remain, and the results of marriage extend beyond the wedding ceremony and beyond the domestic association of man and wife. It is the sexual activities of individuals that are most closely regulated by the fact of marriage. In succession to office and wealth, marriage, as we shall see, plays nowadays a permissive rather than a determining role. It is only by means of the symbolic acts which form part of marriage that a man can be reasonably sure of acquiring rights over his wife and the custody of his children. Yet he may,

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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581 on the one hand, acquire that custody without undertaking any of these symbolic acts, and on the other hand he may have full rights over his wife without ever getting control of his children.

2. Choice

582 Marriage involves choice and selection. There are prescribed 'preferential marriages' in the usual terminology, but as applied to the Ngoni this nomenclature is misleading, for, as in the old days, a woman who marries her cross-cousin does not have such high status in her husband's compound family as a wife who is not related to her husband. A man behaves in some respects towards his female cross-cousins as though they were his wives or potential wives, but it is incorrect to say that Ngoni men prefer to marry their cross-

Table III. Marital status of males by age, 1948-9

162
586
589
595

Age in years	Marital Status								
	Unwedded	Wedded							Total
		Number of wives						Total wedded men	
		0		1	2	3	Not known		
		Divorced men	Widowers						
0-4	51	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	51
5-9	61	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	61
10-14	55	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	55
15-19	28	1	–	2	–	–	–	3	31
20-24	14	–	–	6	–	–	–	6	20
25-29	–	2	–	13	–	–	1	16	16
30-34	–	1	–	7	–	–	–	8	8
35-39	–	–	–	13	3	1	–	17	17
40-44	–	–	–	4	2	2	–	8	8
45-49	–	–	–	4	2	2	–	8	8
50-54	–	–	–	8	–	–	1	9	9
55-59	–	1	–	4	–	–	1	6	6
60-64	–	–	–	8	1	–	1	10	10
65-69	–	–	–	9	2	–	–	11	11
70-74	–	1	1	6	1	1	–	10	10
75-79	–	1	–	1	1	–	–	3	3
Not known	–	–	–	1	–	–	6	7	7
Total	209	7	1	83	11	4	10	116	325

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

cousins. Whether a man decides to marry a cross-cousin or an unrelated woman, he still has to decide just exactly whom he will try to marry, and similarly a woman has also to make up her own mind about whom she will accept as husband. The initiative in choosing lies very largely with the couple themselves, and not with their parents and kinsmen. If a man is diffident about asking a woman to marry him, he may ask his father or elder brother to seek out a woman for him, or a woman may have a spouse presented to

Table IV. Marital status of females, by age, 1948-9

Age in years	Marital status								Total
	Unwedded	Wedded							
		Divorced women living alone	Widows living alone	Divorced women living in polygamy	Married women			Total wedded women	
					HH	HA	HS		
0-4	58	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	58
5-9	65	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	65
10-14	54	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	54
15-19	20	–	1	–	14	9	1	25	45
20-24	–	3	–	–	10	11	–	24	24
25-29	–	1	–	1	17	8	1	29	29
30-34	1	–	–	–	14	8	–	22	23
35-39	–	–	–	–	19	3	1	23	23
40-44	–	2	1	–	13	1	1	18	18
45-49	–	–	2	–	13	2	–	17	17
50-54	–	3	–	–	7	3	1	14	14
55-59	–	1	5	–	6	–	1	13	13
60-64	–	1	8	–	5	1	1	15	15
65-69	–	2	8	–	1	–	–	11	11
70-74	–	–	5	–	1	–	–	6	6
75-79	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
80-84	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	1
Not known	–	–	–	–	4	–	–	4	4
Total	198	14	31	1	122	46	7	223	421

Legend

HH (Husband at Home) Husband living within thirty miles of his wife, in a village, and not separated from her

HA (Husband Away) Husband living permanently on a farm, or in Fort Jameson, or more than thirty miles away

HS (Husband Separated) Husband living within thirty miles, in a village, but separated from his wife

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

The precise significance of these ratios need not concern us here. It is sufficient to note that they indicate that divorce among the Ngoni is more frequent than it is among the Nguni people from whom they first came where divoce is said to be 'rare'.[26] The Ngoni ratios are closer to the Lamba and Bemba than to the Tswana.[27] The indication is that Ngoni informants are right when they assert that divorce is much more frequent than it used to be, for it seems legitimate to suppose that in former times the Ngoni were more like their Nguni forbears, in this as in other things, than they are now.

Once agreed upon, either at the court or in the village, divorce

Table IX. Marital experience of males, by age, 1948-9

Present age in years	Marital experience													
	All males								Wedded males only					
	Number of marriages entered into since birth								Number of divorces experienced since birth					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	Not known	Total	0	1	2	3	Not known	Total
0-4	51	–	–	–	–	–	–	51	–	–	–	–	–	0
5-9	61	–	–	–	–	–	–	61	–	–	–	–	–	0
10-14	55	–	–	–	–	–	–	55	–	–	–	–	–	0
15-19	28	3	–	–	–	–	–	31	2	1	–	–	–	3
20-24	14	5	–	–	–	–	1	20	5	–	–	–	1	6
25-29	–	12	3	–	–	–	1	16	11	4	–	–	1	16
30-34	–	6	2	–	–	–	–	8	4	4	–	–	–	8
35-39	–	8	6	1	2	–	–	17	10	6	1	–	–	17
40-44	–	3	1	2	1	1	–	8	4	3	1	–	–	8
45-49	–	4	3	–	1	–	1	9	5	2	1	–	1	9
50-54	–	3	2	–	–	–	1	6	4	1	–	–	1	6
55-59	–	5	1	2	–	1	1	10	5	3	–	1	1	10
60-64	–	3	3	3	1	–	–	11	7	2	–	2	–	11
65-69	–	1	5	3	1	–	–	10	4	6	–	–	–	10
70-74	–	–	1	1	1	–	–	3	1	1	1	–	–	3
75-79	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	2	1	1	–	–	–	2
Not known	–	–	–	–	–	–	7	7	–	–	–	–	7	7
Total	209	53	28	11	9	3	12	325	63	34	4	3	12	116

[26] Gluckman, 'Kinship and marriage among the Lozi of Northern Rhodesia and the Zulu of Natal', in Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, eds., *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 204.

[27] Gluckman in Mitchell and Barnes, 'The Lamba Village: report of a social survey' (*Communications from the School of African Studies*, University of Cape Town, new series No. 24), pp. 15 ff., and Richards, *op. cit.* p. 120.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

586 is normally irrevocable and couples do not often go back to each other. If a wife does go back soon after a divorce people laugh at her for having caused trouble over nothing. A husband may sometimes assert that his wife has been divorced without his approval, perhaps while he was away working, but such complaints go unanswered for it is in the interests of the court to uphold its own decisions. Even if a man is living in the rural area his wife may get a divorce if he refuses to go to court to defend his case. In addition he runs the risk of a fine for contempt of court. The somewhat lengthy process by which a woman can get her divorce despite the obstruction of her husband is illustrated by the following account of a court case.

159 593 586 *Case history 2*

In April 1946 Zachariah, a man holding the royal descent-name and married to Ruth and Naomi, began to make advances to a recently divorced

Table X. Marital experience of females, by age, 1948-9

Present age in years	Marital experience: All females — Number of marriages entered into since birth								Wedded females only — Number of divorces experienced since birth					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	Not known	Total	0	1	2	3	Not known	Total
0-4	58	–	–	–	–	–	–	58	–	–	–	–	–	0
5-9	65	–	–	–	–	–	–	65	–	–	–	–	–	0
10-14	54	–	–	–	–	–	–	54	–	–	–	–	–	0
15-19	20	23	1	–	–	–	1	45	23	1	–	–	1	25
20-24	–	20	3	–	–	–	1	24	19	2	2	–	1	24
25-29	–	24	4	–	–	–	1	29	23	4	1	–	1	29
30-34	1	15	4	1	–	–	2	23	16	4	–	–	2	22
35-39	–	12	7	2	–	–	2	23	16	4	1	–	2	23
40-44	–	10	5	2	1	–	–	18	10	6	2	–	–	18
45-49	–	5	11	–	1	–	–	17	11	3	–	1	–	17
50-54	–	6	7	–	1	–	–	14	7	5	1	1	–	14
55-59	–	7	5	1	–	–	–	13	10	2	–	1	–	13
60-64	–	9	4	1	–	–	1	15	12	1	1	–	1	15
65-69	–	5	5	–	–	1	–	11	8	2	–	–	1	11
70-74	–	3	3	–	–	–	–	6	6	–	–	–	–	6
75-79	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	–	1
80-84	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	1
Not known	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	4	–	–	–	–	4	4
Total	198	140	80	7	3	1	12	431	182	37	8	3	13	223

5: Allan C-5 (1941)1949 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni
Lamba FQ8

The people in the original area were short of food but by no means at starvation level. This was ascertained by taking seven sample villages at random within the congested area and weighing their entire food stocks during the first fortnight of February. From these samples the following data were obtained.

Grain Stocks of Seven Ngoni Villages

(February 1941)

Total population			Total grain stocks
Men	Women	Children	lb.
292	389	531	24,710

Making no allowance for a special reserve of seed against a possible need for replanting, or for loss in preparing flour and for other reasons, the grain stock represents not more than 20 days usage, and supplies would probably be exhausted by early March. There was much variation between villages; one exceptional village had enough grain for 46 days while in another the grain stocks represented only 4 days supply. It will be remembered, however, that in an African social system, kinship obligations tend to even out the distribution of food supplies.

In striking contrast to these samples, a village which had recently made an illicit move to unoccupied private land was found to have, at the end of February, grain stocks representing 81 days supply. The effects of falling yields first make themselves felt in the bad years and it should be noted that the sampling was done in a year following a good climatic season. It will also be noted that villages which would in all probability have reached the starvation level had already transferred themselves.

There is, then, a time lag between the beginning of over-crowded conditions and the point at which obvious symptoms of land degeneration and soil erosion appear. The length of this time lag clearly depends on a number of factors acting together; the type of land and the system used on it, the degree of congestion, the original population density and the rate of population increase, if any. A further variable time lag elapses before conditions of general food shortage are reached. Under some conditions the process of land degradation may result in food shortage within a very few years, while in other cases this result may not appear for twenty years or more.

Within ten years of the creation of reserves in the Mkushi District obvious land degradation and recurrent food shortages in some areas had reached such a stage as to attract the attention of District Officers, missionaries and other interested persons, and to create an insistent demand for additional land. The population densities in these areas were 18 to 25 persons per square mile. Other areas of the Territory, notably the reserves of the

5: Allan C-5 (1941) 1949

FR5 Ngoni FR5 ●
Mpezeni
Lamba FQ8
Maravi FR4

L
M
N
102
162 ●
311
423
648

Crown land, Company land, alienated land and unoccupied Native Reserve. Largely uninhabited.

Land in Native occupation. Largely underpopulated.

Land in Native occupation. Overpopulated.

Fig 2.— THE SECONDARY POPULATION-LAND PATTERN.

Land in Native occupation. Reformed or under-populated.

Fig 3.— THE POPULATION-LAND PATTERN AFTER RESETTLEMENT.

/4 cont'd/

national basis to include all the adolescent males in the tribe, whatever their origin. Women were grouped into corresponding regiments. This system broke down after the first World War, when so many young men went away in the fighting. To-day the great exodus is not to war but to work, to the mines of Southern Rhodesia and elsewhere, and the incidence of labour migration is so high that it is not unknown to find a village in which there is no adult male resident. Part of the exodus is seasonal, and many men and women, as well as children, find employment on the tobacco farms of the district and in Fort Jameson Township.

II

The staple crop is maize, of which enough is grown to provide in good years for a small surplus for sale to the tobacco farms and the Administration. Tobacco is not grown by Africans for sale, except within the villages, but vegetables and a little rice and finger millet are sold to Europeans. Cattle are kept in the fly-free areas, and play an important but diminishing part in social life as the means of paying bridewealth, but the sale of cattle is not at present a regular affair. Their principal use is as a form of capital investment that can be called up to meet damages and fines awarded by the Courts.

The population of the tribe is about 60,000, the majority living in the Ngoni and Msandile Reserves, both near to Fort /5/ Jameson. The remainder live on the tobacco farms or in Fort Jameson Township. Villages vary in size from settlements of three or four huts to large clusters containing up to 500 people. The average size of a village is about thirty huts with a population of 100.

The Ngoni conquerors reckoned descent in the male line, while most of the people whom they conquered and with whom they married traced descent through the mother. To-day for practical purposes, descent is omnilateral, in that any connection through a male or female ancestor can be made use of as the occasion demands.

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890)1911
FR5 Ngoni FR5

when the death penalty can hardly be exacted, or compensation made in the delivery over of slaves, they find it hard to satisfy demands and make a show of justice.

Now let us speak of the social life of the people. The Ngoni differ from most of the Central Africa tribes in their habit of living in large unprotected villages. The tendency of most of the other tribes is to scatter themselves in very little hamlets over a wide area, with scarcely a path of communication between the villages. Where war has harassed them they have built huge stockaded villages for their mutual protection, but as soon as assured peace has come again, the towns have split into numerous distant groups of houses. This seems to be caused by the dread and mistrust of one another which the people have through their superstitious belief in a evil eye, and in witchcraft, and through the perpetual little quarrels that arise. A carrier who was accompanying a friend of mine describing this state very well when they passed a little village of four huts, and then a few hundred yards further on an isolated hut. Holding up his hand he cried, "Look at Mr. Thumb saying to Mrs. Fourfingers, keep your distance."

The heart of a Ngoni village is the large circular cattle kraal. There all the court cases are tried, there the visitors are received, and there the dances are held. Round the kraal the village of bandsome huts is built in regular rows, and then immediately outside the gardens begin. The village life was the place of family life, and the headman is father of all the people. The boys after they have attained to twelve years of age or so live in huts by themselves, and the girls in huts on the opposite side of the village. These girls' quarters used to be most carefully guarded, and any man found in their enclosure after dark could be killed.

The great part of the Ngoni nation consists of domestic slaves. They are people, or the descendants of people, who have been captured in raiding expeditions. But their position is not a hard one. If they are discontented they may change masters. They give their masters a little free labour, and in return are made members of his family; he supports all their quarrels, looks after them in sickness, and shares some of his superfluity with them, but they have to share some of their necessities with him.

Polygamy was the universal custom of the people until recently. Now hundreds of polygamous unions are being dissolved every year. But in the rougher days polygamy was a necessary